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WHAT
PATRIOTISM DEMANDS

AN AMERICAN CATHOLIC'S VIEW

By J. L. SPALDING

BISHOP OF PEORIA

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AN AMERICAN CATHOLIC'S VIEW.

By J. L. SPALDING,

Bishop of Peoria.

We have sympathized with all oppressed peoples—with Ireland, Greece, Armenia, Cuba. To emancipate the slave we gladly sacrificed the lives of hundreds of thousands of our soldiers. And now the American soldier, who should never shoulder a gun except in a righteous cause, is sent ten thousand miles across the ocean to shoot men whose real crime is that they wish to be free, wish to govern themselves. To say that they are unfit for freedom is to put forth the plea of the tyrant in all ages and everywhere. The enemies of liberty have never lacked for pretexts to justify their wrongs; but, in truth, at the root of all wars of conquest there lies lust for blood or for gold.

If the inhabitants of the Philippines came gladly to throw themselves into our arms, we should refuse to do more than counsel, guide, and protect them until they form themselves into a stable and independent government. What, then, is to be thought of those who seem resolved either to

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rule or exterminate them, believing probably that the only good Filipino is a dead Filipino?

The argument that our policy has from the beginning been one of expansion has no application in the present crisis. By the treaty of 1783 the Mississippi river was recognized as the western boundary of the United States; but when in 1802 the Spanish civil officers, whom France, having recovered Louisiana, left in command, issued a proclamation closing the Mississippi to American commerce, it at once became manifest that we could not leave the mouth of the great river which flowed for more than a thousand miles through our territory, in the possession of a foreign power. Thomas Jefferson, therefore, acted in the spirit of a patriot and a statesman, when, taking advantage of the embarrassments of Bonaparte, he purchased the whole region lying west of the Mississippi and not already occupied by Spain. Here was a natural development, the gaining possession of vast tracts of unsettled lands which, if not peopled by American citizens would become the home of a powerful rival state, and this would involve wars, standing armies and the jeopardy of free institutions. Similar reasons justified the purchase of Florida in 1819. When, in 1845, we annexed the republic of Texas, we did what the Texans themselves wished us to do. Disputes concerning the western boundary of Texas led to the war with Mexico, which, at the close of the

war sold to the United States New Mexico and Upper California, including Nevada and Utah, most of Arizona, and parts of Colorado. These countries were scarcely inhabited, Upper California containing not more than fifteen thousand people. In this whole course of expansion we followed the line of natural development. We entered upon the possession of waste regions which were geographically part of our country, and which we were certain to fill with populations similar to those occupying the states already founded. To carry out this work there could be no need of a standing army or a powerful navy; none of making war to conquer and hold in subjection races which, being altogether unlike ourselves, claimed the right, in the establishment of a government, to be guided by their own ideas and traditions. In purchasing these territories, it may be said that we bought land and not human beings—land that was part of our inheritance. But now, following the lead of our great capitalists and trustlords, we buy at one stroke ten million human beings; beings who live in another hemisphere, who differ from us in every way, who dwell in a climate which is fatal to the white man, who can be of no advantage whatever to us, but who, if we persist in holding them, will involve us in the most serious difficulties and dangers. A war of conquest is in contradiction with our fundamental principles of government; it is op-

posed to all our traditions. The thought of ruling over subject peoples is repugnant to our deepest and noblest sentiments. It is part of our good fortune, of our providential position and mission in the world, that our country is vast enough and self-sufficient enough to make all desire for conquest an unholy and meaningless temptation. We have room for three or four hundred millions of human beings. If more are required, and we are true to ourselves, British America will come to us without there being need of firing a gun.

We have money enough already, and our wealth is increasing rapidly. What we have to learn is how to live, how to distribute our money, how to take from it its mastery over us and make it our servant.

Commercial and manufacturing competition is becoming a struggle for existence fiercer than that which makes Nature red with ravin in tooth and claw. Whereas the tendency of true civilization and religion is to convert the struggle for life into co-operation for life, into work of all for all, that all may have those inner goods which make men wise, holy, beautiful, and strong ;—whereas, this is the tendency of right civilization, our greed, our superstitious belief in money as the only true God and Saviour of man, hurries us on with increasing speed into all the venalities, dishonesties, and corruptions, into all the tricks and trusts by which the people are disheartened and impover-

ished. We are hypnotized by the glitter and glare, the pomp and circumstance of wealth, and are becoming incapable of a rational view of life. We have lost taste for simple things and simple ways. We flee from the country as from a desert, and find self-forgetfulness only amid the noise and rush of great cities, where high thought and pure affection are well nigh impossible. How far we have drifted from that race of farmers who threw off the yoke of England and built the noble state; who believed that honor was better than money, freedom than luxury and display! Their plain democratic Republic is no longer good enough for us. We are become imperial. We must have mighty armies, and navies which shall encircle the earth, to bring into subjection weak and unprotected savages and barbarians. Why? For glory? No. That is a standpoint we have left behind. For humanity? Wholesale murder is not humanity. Why? For money, more money, money without end.

We are the victims of commercialism; we have caught the contagion of the insanity that the richest nations are the worthiest and most enduring. We have lost sight of the eternal principles that all freedom is enrooted in moral freedom, that riches are akin to fear and death, that by the soul only can a nation be great.

If we but have the courage to look steadfastly and to see things as they are, we shall easily per-

ceive that our true work lies here, and not ten thousand miles away. We are the foremost bearers of the most precious treasures of the race: in the success of the experiment which we are making the hopes of all noble and generous souls for a higher life of mankind are centred. If we fail, the world fails; if we succeed, we shall do more for the good of all men than if we conquered all the islands and continents. Our mission is to show that popular government on a vast scale is compatible with the best culture, the purest religion, the highest justice, and that it can permanently endure. In comparison with this what would be a thousand groups of Philippines?—what the most brilliant career of imperial pomp and glory?

[The policy commended by Bishop Spalding is in brief that we establish republics in Cuba and the Phillipines instead of making them subject colonies, and that we ourselves continue a republic faithful to the Declaration of Independence instead of becoming an Empire and championing the claims of George III.]



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